

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1-20. (Canceled)

21. A method for determining which advertisements to include with electronic content delivered to users over a network, the method comprising the steps of:
- after accepting a first contract with a first advertiser, accepting a second contract with a second advertiser;
- wherein the delivery obligations associated with the second contract are such that fulfillment of the second contract would adversely affect a level of service the first advertiser would otherwise receive under the first contract;
- storing data that indicates delivery criteria and delivery obligations for each of a plurality of contracts, wherein each contract is associated with an advertiser of a plurality of advertisers,
- wherein the plurality of contracts includes the first contract and the second contract;
- wherein the plurality of advertisers includes the first advertiser and the second advertiser;
- wherein each contract of the plurality of contracts is associated with a separate advertisement of a plurality of advertisements;
- ~~wherein a first contract with a first advertiser of the plurality of advertisers was formed before a second contract with a second advertiser of the plurality of advertisers;~~
- after the plurality of contracts have been formed, receiving, from a user, a request to provide over said network a piece of electronic content that includes a slot for an advertisement;

wherein the piece of electronic content has a subject;

wherein the subject of the piece of electronic content is an attribute of the slot that is

included in the piece of electronic content;

in response to receiving the request:

reading said data to determine delivery criteria associated with the plurality of
contracts;

comparing slot attributes of said slot in the requested electronic content with
delivery criteria of said plurality of contracts to determine a subset of
said plurality of advertisements which qualify for inclusion in said slot,
wherein the subject of the piece of electronic content is one of the slot
attributes compared with the delivery criteria,

~~wherein the slot attributes include at least one attribute that corresponds to the~~
~~subject of the electronic content,~~

wherein both a first advertisement associated with the first contract and a second
advertisement associated with the second contract qualify for inclusion in
said slot,

wherein the second contract is associated with a behindness value that is
currently greater than a behindness value associated with the first
contract,

wherein the behindness value of each contract reflects how far behind a content
provider is on satisfying the delivery obligations associated with each
contract; and

from said subset of advertisements, selecting said first advertisement to include
in the slot based, at least in part, on the first contract having been formed
before the second contract;

inserting said first advertisement into the slot to create a modified piece of
electronic content;

delivering, as a response to the request, the modified piece of electronic content
to the user;

wherein the steps of receiving, reading, comparing, selecting, inserting, and delivering
are performed on one or more computing devices.

22. (previously presented) The method of Claim 21, wherein:

the method further comprises the step of determining which advertisements in the
plurality of advertisements are associated with delivery obligations that are not
on track to be satisfied; and

the step of determining a subset of said plurality of advertisements which qualify for
inclusion in said slot includes selecting for said subset only advertisements that
are associated with delivery obligations that are not on track to be satisfied.

23. (previously presented) The method of Claim 21, wherein the step of comparing slot
attributes of said slot with delivery criteria of said contracts to determine a subset of said
plurality of advertisements which qualify for inclusion in said slot is performed in
response to receiving said request.

24. (previously presented) The method of Claim 23, wherein:

the request was made by a specific user; and
at least one of said slot attributes, which are used to determine which advertisements
qualify for inclusion in said slot, corresponds to information associated with the
specific user.

25. (previously presented) The method of Claim 21, wherein the piece of electronic content is a web page.
26. (previously presented) The method of Claim 21, wherein the piece of electronic content is a video stream.
27. (previously presented) The method of Claim 21, further comprising the steps of:
associating a priority class with each of said plurality of advertisements; and
filtering out of said subset one or more advertisements that have a priority class that is
lower than the priority class of any other advertisement that belongs to said
subset.
28. (previously presented) The method of Claim 21, further comprising the step of filtering
out of said subset all advertisements that are associated with delivery obligations that
are on track to be satisfied.
29. (canceled)

30. (currently amended) A computer-readable storage medium storing instructions for determining which advertisements to include with electronic content delivered to users over a network, which instructions, when executed by one or more processors, causes the one or more processors to perform the steps of:
- after accepting a first contract with a first advertiser, accepting a second contract with a second advertiser;
- wherein the delivery obligations associated with the second contract are such that fulfillment of the second contract would adversely affect a level of service the first advertiser would otherwise receive under the first contract;
- storing data that indicates delivery criteria and delivery obligations for each of a plurality of contracts, wherein each contract is associated with an advertiser of a plurality of advertisers,
- wherein the plurality of contracts includes the first contract and the second contract;
- wherein the plurality of advertisers includes the first advertiser and the second advertiser;
- wherein each contract of the plurality of contracts is associated with a separate advertisement of a plurality of advertisements;
- ~~wherein a first contract with a first advertiser of the plurality of advertisers was formed before a second contract with a second advertiser of the plurality of advertisers;~~
- after the plurality of contracts have been formed, receiving, from a user, a request to provide over said network a piece of electronic content that includes a slot for an advertisement;
- wherein the piece of electronic content has a subject;

wherein the subject of the piece of electronic content is an attribute of the slot that is included in the piece of electronic content;

in response to receiving the request:

reading said data to determine delivery criteria associated with the plurality of contracts;

comparing slot attributes of said slot in the requested electronic content with delivery criteria of said plurality of contracts to determine a subset of said plurality of advertisements which qualify for inclusion in said slot, wherein the subject of the piece of electronic content is one of the slot attributes compared with the delivery criteria,

~~wherein the slot attributes include at least one attribute that corresponds to the subject of the electronic content,~~

wherein both a first advertisement associated with the first contract and a second advertisement associated with the second contract qualify for inclusion in said slot,

wherein the second contract is associated with a behindness value that is currently greater than a behindness value associated with the first contract,

wherein the behindness value of each contract reflects how far behind a content provider is on satisfying the delivery obligations associated with each contract; and

from said subset of advertisements, selecting said first advertisement to include in the slot based, at least in part, on the first contract having been formed before the second contract;

inserting said first advertisement into the slot to create a modified piece of electronic content;

delivering, as a response to the request, the modified piece of electronic content to the user.

31. (previously presented) The computer-readable storage medium of Claim 30, wherein:
the instructions include instructions which, when executed by the one or more
processors, further cause the one or more processors to perform the step of
determining which advertisements in the plurality of advertisements are
associated with delivery obligations that are not on track to be satisfied; and
the step of determining a subset of said plurality of advertisements which qualify for
inclusion in said slot includes selecting for said subset only advertisements that
are associated with delivery obligations that are not on track to be satisfied.
32. (previously presented) The computer-readable storage medium of Claim 30, wherein
the instructions include instructions which, when executed by the one or more
processors, further cause the one or more processors to perform the step of comparing
slot attributes of said slot with delivery criteria of said contracts to determine a subset of
said plurality of advertisements which qualify for inclusion in said slot is performed in
response to receiving said request.
33. (previously presented) The computer-readable storage medium of Claim 32, wherein:
the request was made by a specific user; and

at least one of said slot attributes, which are used to determine which advertisements qualify for inclusion in said slot, corresponds to information associated with the specific user.

34. (previously presented) The computer-readable storage medium of Claim 30, wherein the piece of electronic content is a web page.
35. (previously presented) The computer-readable storage medium of Claim 30, wherein the piece of electronic content is a video stream.
36. (previously presented) The computer-readable storage medium of Claim 30, wherein the instructions include instructions which, when executed by the one or more processors, further cause the one or more processors to perform the steps of:
associating a priority class with each of said plurality of advertisements; and
filtering out of said subset one or more advertisements that have a priority class that is
lower than the priority class of any other advertisement that belongs to said
subset.
37. (previously presented) The computer-readable storage medium of Claim 30, wherein the instructions include instructions which, when executed by the one or more processors, further cause the one or more processors to perform the step of filtering out of said subset all advertisements that are associated with delivery obligations that are on track to be satisfied.

38. (canceled)